

Honorable Members of the Education Committee:

Sixteen years ago, when two of my teenagers were toddlers, I noticed some things. They were happy and healthy and inquisitive. I also noticed that they didn't remember people's names, know their colors, pay attention to letters and, listening to oft-repeated nursery rhymes, I noticed they never sang along. **I didn't know these were all classic signs of dyslexia in pre-school children.**

Fourteen years ago, when my two teenagers were in kindergarten and first grade, I noticed some things. They were happy and healthy and inquisitive. I also noticed that they were **Failing to Progress** in reading, still did not know people's names, their colors, numbers, letters or rhyme. They were labeled "Specific Learning Disabled "and got special education support. **Never did any school professional use the word dyslexia, or tell me my children had the classic signs of being dyslexic.**

Eleven years ago, when my two teenagers were in 2nd and 3rd grade, having already repeated a grade, I noticed some things. They were happy and healthy and inquisitive but I also noticed the face of shame. I noticed that in spite of being held back, and one-on-one support in special ed, they were still not able to read beyond a few words; **Five years in their local public school and they had Failed to Progress.** I realized their lives were at stake.

Ten years ago, in spring, I removed my children from school for 9 weeks to go to a literacy clinic where progress is monitored and staff is highly trained. They returned to their local school having advanced 3 **GRADE** levels. They were instructional casualties, their years of **Failure to Progress** unnecessary. With results in hand, the district was compelled to offer me compensatory education.

Today, both my kids are great readers, both will attend college. And, as a shout out to Norwalk, the new Superintendent Dr. Rivera is making dynamic and strategic changes to early literacy instruction.

As for Tomorrow—In Connecticut, my children's **Failure to Progress** is not the exception, it is the rule. Considering dyslexia has been studied more than heart disease, and **dyslexics CAN be TAUGHT to read,** it should not be taking so long, costing so much or be so hard. There are 3.1M teachers in America and 2.5M students classified with Specific LD, the vast majority dyslexic. Both groups have due process rights. Does anyone in this room believe that if the dyslexic community were united in exercising their **due process rights** as effectively as the Teacher's unions, we would need to be having this conversation today? With that said,

I support HRB 5562 as a baby step but request the following changes/additions to the bill:

- Provide a universal definition of dyslexia
- Provide a simple, effective early screening tool for dyslexia
- Require all special ed and K-5 teachers, including those already certified, to take and pass the CT Foundation of Reading Test to help ALL readers.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Haynie, NorwalkSEEKS and Parent